



[Page](#) | [Recent changes](#) | [Edit this page](#) | [Page history](#) | [Printable version](#)

Not logged in

[Log in](#) | [Help](#)

Other languages: [Dansk](#) | [Deutsch](#) | [Español](#) | [Français](#) | [??? \(Nihongo\)](#) | [??? \(Pigukeo\)](#) | [Nederlands](#) | [Polski](#) | [Português](#) | [Svenska](#)

## E-mail

[Main Page](#)  
[Recent changes](#)  
[Random page](#)  
[Current events](#)

[Edit this page](#)  
[Discuss this page](#)  
[Page history](#)  
[What links here](#)  
[Related changes](#)

[Special pages](#)  
[Contact us](#)  
[Donations](#)

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**E-mail**, or **email**, is short for "electronic mail" (as opposed to conventional mail, in this context also called snail mail) and refers to composing, sending, and receiving messages over electronic communication systems. Most e-mail systems today use the Internet, and e-mail is one of the most popular uses of the Internet.

### Table of contents

- [1 E-mail before the Internet](#)
- [2 Modern internet e-mail](#)
- [3 Messages and mailboxes](#)
- [4 E-mail content encoding](#)
- [5 Spamming and e-mail worms](#)
- [6 Further Reading](#)
- [7 External links](#)

## E-mail before the Internet

Despite common belief, e-mail actually pre-dates the Internet; in fact, existing e-mail systems were a crucial tool in creating the Internet.

E-mail started in 1965 as a way for multiple users of a time-sharing mainframe computer to communicate; although the exact history is murky, among the first systems to have such a facility were SDC's Q32 and MIT's CTSS.

E-mail was quickly extended to become *network e-mail*, allowing users to pass messages between different computers. The early history of network e-mail is also murky; the AUTODIN system may have been the first allowing electronic text messages to be transferred between users on different computers, in 1966, but it is possible the SAGE system had something similar some time before.

The ARPANET computer network significantly increased the

popularity of e-mail. There is one report [1] which indicates experimental inter-system e-mail transfers on it shortly after its creation, in 1969. The use of the "@" sign to separate the names of the user and their machine, was initiated by Ray Tomlinson in 1972; the common report that he "invented" email is an exaggeration, although his early e-mail programs SNDMSG and READMAIL were very important.

Since not all computers or networks were directly inter-networked, e-mail was forwarded between sites using protocols such as UUCP, and e-mail addresses had to include the "route" of the message, that is, a path between the computer of the sender and the computer of the receivers. E-mail could be passed this way between a number of networks, including the ARPANET, BITNET and NSFNET, as well as to hosts connected directly to other sites via UUCP.

The route was specified using so-call "bang path" addresses, specifying hops to get from some assumed-reachable location to the addressee, so called because each hop is signified by a "bang sign", i.e. "!". Thus, for example, the path ...!bigsite!foovax!barbox!me directs people to route their mail to machine bigsite (presumably a well-known location accessible to everybody) and from there through the machine foovax to the account of user me on barbox.

Before auto-routing mailers became commonplace, people often published compound bang addresses using the { } convention (see glob) to give paths from several big machines, in the hopes that one's correspondent might be able to get mail to one of them reliably (example: ...!{seismo, ut-sally, ihnp4}!rice!beta!gamma!me). Bang paths of 8 to 10 hops were not uncommon in 1981. Late-night dial-up UUCP links would cause week-long transmission times. Bang paths were often selected by both transmission time and reliability, as messages would often get lost. See the network and sitename.

## **Modern internet e-mail**

Nowadays, almost all e-mail is delivered directly to Internet-connected hosts, using DNS MX records and SMTP (Simple Mail Transfer Protocol). Very few modern servers allow routing (automatic or manual) any more due the potential for abuse by people sending unsolicited bulk email. Those that do allow it are called open relays.

A modern Internet e-mail address is a string of the form *jsmith@corporation.com*. It should be read as "jsmith at corporation.com". The first part is the username of the person, and the second part is the hostname of the computer in which that person has

an e-mail account.

The format of internet e-mail messages is defined in RFC 2822. Prior to the introduction of RFC 2822 the format was described by RFC 822.

Internet e-mail messages typically consist of two major components:

- Headers - Message summary, sender, receiver, and other information about the e-mail
- Body - The message itself, usually containing a signature block at the end

The headers usually have at least four fields:

1. From - The e-mail address of the sender of the message
2. To - The e-mail address of the receiver of the message
3. Subject - A brief summary of the contents of the message
4. Date - The local time and date when the message was originally sent

Note however that the "To" field does not necessarily have the email address of the recipient. The information supplied in the headers on the recipients computer is similar to that found on top of a conventional letter. The actual information such as who the message was addressed to is removed by the mail server after it assigns it to the correct user's mailbox.

Other common fields include:

1. Cc - Carbon copy (because typewriters used carbon film to copy what was written on them)
2. Bcc - Blind carbon copy (the recipient of this copy will know who was in the To: field, but the recipients cannot see who is on the Bcc: list)
3. Received - Tracking information generated by mail servers that have previously handled a message
4. Content-Type - Information about how the message has to be displayed, usually a MIME type

## Messages and mailboxes

Messages are exchanged between hosts using the Simple Mail Transfer Protocol with software like Sendmail. Users download their messages from servers usually with either the POP or IMAP protocols, yet in a large corporate environment users are likely to use some

proprietary protocol such as Lotus Notes or Microsoft Exchange Server's.

Mails can be stored either on the client or on the server side. Standard formats for mailboxes include Maildir and mbox. Several prominent e-mail clients use their own, proprietary format, and require conversion software to transfer email between them.

## **E-mail content encoding**

E-mail is only defined to carry 7-bit ASCII messages. Although many e-mail transports are in fact "8-bit clean", this cannot be guaranteed. For this reason, e-mail has been extended by the MIME standard to allow the encoding of binary attachments including images, sounds and HTML attachments.

## **Spamming and e-mail worms**

The usefulness of e-mail is being threatened by two phenomena, spamming and e-mail worms.

Spamming is unsolicited commercial e-mail. Because of the very low cost of sending e-mail, spammers can send hundreds of millions of e-mail messages each day over an inexpensive Internet connection. Hundreds of active spammers sending this volume of mail results in many computer users receiving tens or even hundreds of junk e-mails each day.

E-mail worms use e-mail as a way of replicating themselves into vulnerable computers. Although the first e-mail worm (the Morris worm) affected early UNIX computers, this problem is today almost entirely confined to the Microsoft Windows operating system.

The combination of spam and worm programs results in users receiving a constant drizzle of junk e-mail, which reduces the usefulness of E-mail as a practical tool.

A number of technology-based initiatives mitigate the impact of spam. Congress has also passed a law, the Can Spam Act of 2003, to regulate such e-mail.

## **Further Reading**

- Katie Hafner, Matthew Lyon, *Where Wizards Stay Up Late: The Origins of the Internet* (Simon and Schuster, 1996) also covers the early history of e-mail

See also:

- [E-mail art](#)
- E-mail social issues:
  - [netiquette](#)
  - [Trimming](#)
  - [Internet humor](#)
  - [Internet slang](#)
  - [spam](#)
  - [virus.](#)
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  - [email client](#)
  - [mail transfer agent](#)
  - [webmail / HTMLmail](#)
  - [branded email](#)
- Emailing list:
  - [electronic mailing list](#)
  - [mailing list archive](#)
- [e-mail address](#)
- Free email:
  - [Hotmail.com webmail](#)

## External links

- [The History of Electronic Mail](#) is a personal memoir by the implementer of one of the first e-mail systems
- Michael A. Padlipsky, *[And They Argued All Night...](#)* is an alternative personal recollection of the origins of network e-mail
- [The First E-Mail Message](#) is an article about the history of network e-mail; contains some errors

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[Edit this page](#) | [Discuss this page](#) | [Page history](#) | [What links here](#) | [Related changes](#)  
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| [Nederlands](#) | [Polski](#) | [Português](#) | [Svenska](#)

[Main Page](#) | [About Wikipedia](#) | [Recent changes](#) |

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[Main Page](#) | [Recent changes](#) | [Edit this page](#) |  
[Page history](#)  
[Available version](#)

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Other languages: [?eská](#) | [Deutsch](#) | [Esperanto](#) | [Español](#) | [Français](#) | [Hrvatski](#) | [???](#)  
[ongo](#)) | [??? \(Hangukeo\)](#) | [Nederlands](#) | [Polski](#) | [Português](#) | [Român?](#) | [Svenska](#) |  
[0](#) (Simplified Chinese)

---

[Main Page](#)  
[Recent changes](#)  
[Random page](#)  
[Current events](#)

---

[Edit this page](#)  
[Discuss this page](#)  
[Page history](#)  
[What links here](#)  
[Related changes](#)

---

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## Computer software

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

**Software** is a generic term for organized collections of computer data and instructions, often broken into two major categories: system software that provides the basic non-task-specific functions of the computer, and application software used to accomplish specific user-oriented tasks.

### Table of contents

- [1 System software](#)
- [2 Application software](#)
- [3 Software creation](#)
- [4 Software patents](#)
- [5 Related articles](#)

## System software

System software is responsible for controlling, integrating, and managing the individual hardware components of a computer system so that other software and the users of the system see it as a functional unit without having to be concerned with the low-level details such as transferring data from memory to disk, or rendering text onto a display. Generally, system software consists of an operating system and some fundamental utilities such as disk formatters, file managers, display managers, text editors, user authentication (login) and management tools, and networking and device control software.

## Application software

Application software, on the other hand, is used to accomplish specific tasks other than just running the computer system. Application software may consist of a single program, such as an image viewer; a small collection of programs (often called a software package) that

work closely together to accomplish a task, such as a spreadsheet or text processing system; a larger collection (often called a software suite) of related but independent programs and packages that have a common user interface or shared data format, such as Microsoft Office, which consists of closely integrated word processor, spreadsheet, database, etc.; or a software system, such as a database management system, which is a collection of fundamental programs that may provide some service to a variety of other independent applications.

## Software creation

Software is created with programming languages and related utilities, which may come in several of the above forms: single programs like script interpreters, packages containing a compiler, linker, and other tools; and large suites (often called Integrated Development Environments) that include editors, debuggers, and other tools for multiple languages.

## Software patents

The issue of software patents is very controversial, since while patents protect the ideas of "inventors", they are widely believed to hinder software development.

## Related articles

- Computing
- Computer programming
  - Programming languages
  - Text editors
  - Compilers
  - Algorithms
  - Color management
  - Software development process
  - Software development tools
  - Software optimization
  - Application Programming Interface (API)
- Software packages
  - Graphics programs
    - Graphics file formats
    - Raster graphics
    - Vector graphics
    - 3D graphics
    - Digital video
  - Business software

- Customer Relationship Management
- Art software
  - MLCAD
- Office applications suites
  - Word processor
  - Spreadsheet
  - Database
  - Document management system
- Analytical software
  - DADiSP
  - MathCAD
- Utilities
  - Media players
  - Hard disk recorder
- Collaborative software
  - OpenSource
  - Blog
  - WikiWiki
  - Slashcode
  - NupeCode
  - Everything Engine
- Cryptography
  - Pretty Good Privacy
  - GNU Privacy Guard
- Educational Software
- Internet suite
- Operating systems
  - *(list moved to OS article)*
- Software licenses
  - Open Source software
  - Software piracy
- Origins of computer terms

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 Other languages: [?eská](#) | [Deutsch](#) | [Esperanto](#) | [Español](#) | [Français](#) | [Hrvatski](#) | [???](#)  
[\(Nihongo\)](#) | [???\(Hangukeo\)](#) | [Nederlands](#) | [Polski](#) | [Português](#) | [Român?](#) | [Svenska](#) |  
[??\(?\) \(Simplified Chinese\)](#)

**[Main Page](#)** | **[About Wikipedia](#)** | **[Recent changes](#)** |

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Go

- ☒ Search the site
- ☐ Search WWW

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- [Use the Site](#)
- [Master the Basics](#)
- [Surf the Web](#)
- [Harness E-Mail](#)
- [Find Information](#)
- [Download Files](#)
- [Join Newsgroups](#)
- [Conference](#)
- [Enjoy Multimedia](#)
- [Build a Website](#)
- [Do E-Business](#)
- [Protect Yourself](#)

RESOURCES

- [Animated Internet](#)
- [Glossary](#)
- [Index](#)
- [Newsletter](#)

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- [About Us](#)
- [Partner Programs](#)
- [Write Us](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)

[Access Provider](#)  
[Adobe Acrobat Reader](#)  
[ActiveX](#)  
[ADSL](#)  
[Agent](#)  
[Anchor](#)  
[Applet](#)  
[Archie](#)  
[ARPANET](#)  
[ASCII](#)  
[Attribute](#)  
[Avatar](#)  
[Backbone](#)  
[Bandwidth](#)  
[BBS](#)  
[BFN](#)  
[Binary File](#)  
[Bit](#)  
[Bitmapped Image](#)  
[Bot](#)  
[Bps](#)  
[Browser](#)  
[BTW](#)  
[Byte](#)  
[Cache](#)  
[CD-ROM](#)  
[CGI](#)  
[Chat](#)  
[Chat Room](#)  
[Clickable Image](#)  
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[Cryptography](#)  
[Cyberspace](#)  
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[Dial-Up Account](#)  
[Directory](#)  
[Dithering](#)  
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[Executable File](#)  
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[FAQ](#)  
[File Compression](#)  
[File Permissions](#)  
[Finger](#)  
[Firewall](#)  
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## Cookie

A cookie is a file sent to a web browser by a web server that is used to record one's activities on a website. For instance, when you buy items from a site and place them in a so-called virtual shopping cart, that information is stored in the cookie. When the browser requests additional files, the cookie information is sent back to the server. Cookies can remember other kinds of personal information, such as your password, so you don't have to re-enter it each time you visit the site; and your preferences, so the next time you return to a site, you can be presented with customized information. Some people regard cookies as an invasion of privacy; others think they are a harmless way to make websites more personal.

Most cookies have an expiration date and either reside in your computer's memory until you close your browser or saved to your hard drive. By the way, cookies cannot read information stored in your computer.

You can use a text editor to view cookie files. For Windows users of Netscape Navigator, the file is called cookies.txt and is located in the same folder as Netscape. Macintosh users can find it in the Netscape folder in the System/Preferences folder. Internet Explorer creates separate files for each cookie and stores them in folders named Cookies or Temporary Internet Files.